

February 28, 2023

Dear Chair and Members,

RE: Hearing on SF865 (Westlin) - Funding for the Minnesota Council on Economic Education

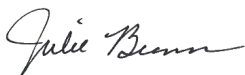
The Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE) appreciates the opportunity to speak before the Committee regarding our economic and financial literacy education programming that supports delivery of the state Social Studies standards for economics (and embedded, personal finance). In addition to the points below, this packet includes a case statement in support of the bill, student programming participant quotes, and teacher testimonials.

A few points specifically related to the financial literacy and capability portion of our programming:

- MCEE has been working in the economic and financial literacy education space since its founding in 1961.
- MCEE serves the mission to increase the economic and financial literacy of all Minnesotans by
 - Training K-12 teachers to deliver financial literacy education with courses, workshops and supporting materials and lessons,
 - Developing curricular materials for K-12 teachers to use in teaching economics and personal finance ,
 - Providing student competitions and capstone experiences related to economics and personal finance,
 - And, training the staff of community-based non-profit organizations to deliver customized financial literacy education to their clients.
- In addition to developing its own materials, and making available to all Minnesota teachers the award winning lessons produced by Minnesota teachers, MCEE curates the best materials and lessons from across the country to share with Minnesota teachers. In serving Minnesota teachers, MCEE partners with the national Council on Economic Education, the National Association of Economic Educators, the national nonprofit NextGen Personal Finance, the National Endowment for Financial Education, and regional branches of the Federal Reserve Bank system, and leverages the resources of over 100 Councils and affiliated Centers for Economic Education across the country.
- In addition to our own online and in-person economics and personal finance education workshops, MCEE collaborates with, and brings workshops to, the conferences for MBITE, MCSS and the Agriculture Education teachers, as well as directly to larger school districts through their teacher professional development days.
- MCEE provides workshops on economics and personal finance for teachers at the beginning of their careers, those midway in their careers and those working with diverse student populations. MCEE has led the way nationally among state councils in developing materials for, and delivering workshops on, culturally responsive economics and personal finance education.

Thank you for your consideration of SF865, our testimony and the accompanying materials.

Sincerely,



Julie Bunn, PhD
Executive Director, MCEE



Additional information about MCEE can be found using these links:

- [MCEE FY2022 Annual Report](#)
- [MCEE FY2021 Annual Report](#)
- [Overview of MCEE video](#)
- [Overview of MCEE student competitions](#)
- [2021 informal video with three teacher testimonials](#)



MCEE Case Statement

K-12 Education Finance Committee
HF932 (Clardy)/SF865 (Westlin)

The Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit provides robust professional development opportunities for teachers throughout the state to help deliver Minnesota's economic and personal finance learning standards. The mission of MCEE is to equip all Minnesotans with the economic and financial understanding needed to succeed in today's complex world and that mission begins in Minnesota classrooms.

MCEE requests \$500,000 beginning FY2024 and continuing in the base, to prepare Minnesota teachers to teach economics and personal finance

- This funding level represents approximately one-half the cost of providing a robust teacher professional development program for the almost 1,600 new teachers each year and ongoing professional development for approximately 30,000 teachers with one of the four licensure areas that deliver the economics standards: elementary education, business education, agricultural education and social studies. Private sources will continue to be solicited to provide the remainder of the necessary funding.
- State funding is essential to allow MCEE to:
 - Deliver a comprehensive set of professional development opportunities, including in-person and online training programs available across the state. This includes introductions to the topic, refresher and specialty workshops, and full courses for graduate credit that all teachers with non-economics-related undergraduate and master's degrees need to be eligible to teach economics through the College in the Schools (CIS) Program.
 - Support an ongoing Master Teacher program with statewide reach. This program trains exceptional K-12 teachers to deliver teacher professional development and to serve as mentors to their peers throughout Minnesota. An MCEE Master Teacher corps of fifteen currently serves the state.
 - Revitalize and sustain the affiliated regional Centers for Economic Education at St. Cloud State University and Minnesota State University – Mankato, and the Center for Diversity in Economics at St. Catherine's University. This funding also supports the network of PhD economists across the state who work with our Master Teachers and in engage in curriculum development and review.
- With this funding, MCEE aims to reach over 2,000 teachers a year with professional development opportunities and other resources.

MCEE is at a turning point, and investment in economics and personal finance education makes sense

- MCEE faces three concurrent financial challenges: (1) higher education institutions no longer providing significant support to the Council and the affiliated centers for economic education due to strains on their own budgets; (2) historical sources of federal funding are no longer available and (3) most corporate donors are no longer willing to support teacher professional development or programs designed to recognize teaching excellence.
- Many states provide on-going funding to their Council on Economic Education and centers through base appropriations. These states have stable, robust programming. Minnesota should as well!

The Problems Being Addressed

- State academic standards require all high school students to learn economics, but only 2% of teachers responsible for delivering these standards focused on economics in their teacher preparation programs. Most of these nearly 30,000 teachers need support and assistance to engage students in economics and personal finance.

- Economics influences so much of daily life, from policy discussions in legislature to the price of food and gas, yet there is a widespread lack of knowledge of economics among Minnesotans.
- A 2019 study by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority found that only 40% of Minnesotans could answer basic questions about personal finance and economics correctly. This lack of knowledge of personal finance can lead to risky behaviors that can endanger Minnesotans' financial futures.
- Economic and financial literacy are not just buzzwords. Research has shown that improved financial literacy increases the level of household assets, increases the likelihood that a person will save their money, and leads to more stable communities and better-trained workers. Higher economic and personal finance literacy means more informed and active citizens, which makes our democracy stronger.
- Research shows that low-income individuals and people of color receive less and lower-quality instruction in economics and personal finance, and that people of color and women consistently perform worse on tests of economic and financial literacy than white men. These racial and gender gaps are fueled by inequitable access to high-quality instruction and trained teachers in economics at the K-12 level.

MCEE: Advancing Economic and Financial Literacy

- MCEE trains teachers to deliver economics and personal finance content in classrooms because over the course of their career an average teacher will impact more than 3,000 students. In FY2021, 2,500 teachers registered for MCEE webinars and in FY2022 registrations exceeded 1,700.
- MCEE offers programs for students that complement our teacher training by encouraging students to apply their classroom learning to real-world situations and problems in economics, personal finance and sustainability. In fiscal year 2022, MCEE directly served 1,162 students through student competitions and capstone experiences and reached over 87,000 students in the classroom through teachers trained in that year alone. The summer elementary-level Mathematics and Economics program served an additional 1,825 students.
- MCEE, unique among state councils in the US, has been developing curriculum and leading workshops on environmental economics for K-12 teachers since the 1990's. MCEE offers specialized programs and curricula on environmental topics, developed in collaboration with researchers and industry leaders, including sustainability, renewable energy, food issues, and resource conservation.

MCEE: Supporting Education Equity and Racial Justice

- MCEE works to address racial and gender gaps in access to economics and personal finance. MCEE targets programs and increases outreach to better meet the needs of underserved schools and students.
- In 2018, MCEE collaborated with St. Catherine University to establish the Center for Diversity in Economics, offering a large array of workshops, student and professional programs, and serving as a hub for research on culturally responsive instruction and inclusion in economics and personal finance.
- MCEE creates and curates personal finance and economic curricula that center on the experiences of BIPOC students and promotes culturally responsive methods of instruction. MCEE shares this information with teachers across the state and it was the focus of MCEE's 2020 annual conference.
- MCEE hosts a weeklong program each year to prepare BIPOC and first-generation college students for life after high school, including college preparation, financial aid, and career exploration units.
- Since 2005, MCEE has trained 116 community organizations across the state to deliver financial literacy and resiliency workshops to marginalized and underserved Minnesotans, many of them recent immigrants, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to become financially stable.

Contact: MCEE Government Relations Consultants, Brad Lundell, lundelllegislative31@gmail.com, 612-220-7459, and Valerie Dosland, Ewald Consulting, at valeried@ewald.com, or MCEE Executive Director, Julie Bunn, jbunn@umn.edu, 612-624-9477.

"I feel more confident in living a stable lifestyle and financing well after this program. It has helped me open my eyes to scholarships and financing for the college life, as well as ensuring the best for myself in many areas."

- Fateya O., 2019 College Dollars & Sense

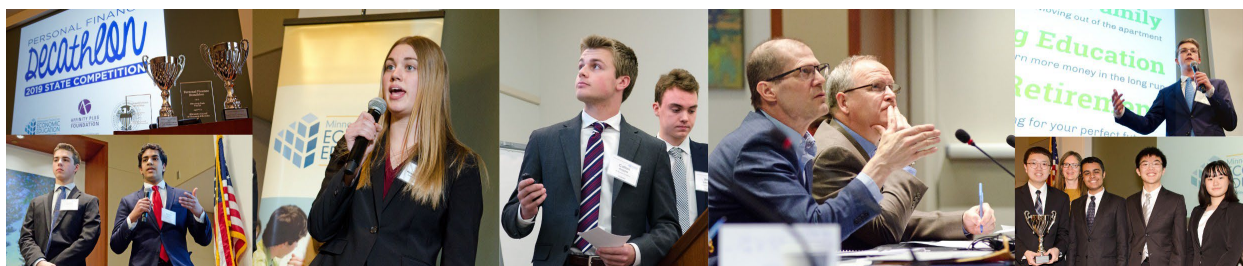
"The Economics Challenge helped me grow as a thinker and as a learner. I would definitely do this again next year!"- Stephen K, 2022 Economics Challenge

"Thank you for hosting this program. It helped me realize that there are people here to support me. It helped me see I am not alone because I go through a lot of drama at school, people make fun of me for how I look and how much I weigh. I would like to stay in contact with the teachers if possible. I learned so much this week." - Brad L., 2020 College Dollars & Sense

"I enjoyed this year's College Dollars & Senses; it was very informational. Before this program, I wasn't sure what major I wanted to study and what university I wanted to attend. Each session helped me with my college search. I received detailed information about choosing and paying for college. Each topic was broken down in a clear and precise manner, making it easier to comprehend. The worksheets and quizzes helped me plan my future and be financially successful." -Tera B., 2022 College Dollars & Sense

"This competition was a great experience. It is a valuable way to learn about economics and how it applies to our lives." - Oluwatomisin A, 2022 Economics Challenge

"Thank you all for this course. It was a fun experience and I know I'll surely be able to use this knowledge in the future." -Zaza N., 2022 College Dollars & Sense



Siri Ansonge

Former Student

Austin High School Class of 2021

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts on how valuable the Minnesota Council on Economic Education was for me, my teacher, and my classmates during my high school economics class. Hopefully, I am able through my word here to convince you all of the need to fund this valuable organization.

For our class as a whole, my teacher used Minnesota Council materials in just about every unit we covered. The materials were very clearly written and were relatable to what was going on in our lives. For my teacher, he couldn't say enough good things about the materials and the programs offered by the Minnesota Council.

Also, for me, the Minnesota Council and its programs and materials were incredibly helpful in my learning. Austin, MN, my hometown, is also home to a Fortune 500 food company and a Salvation Army Food Shelf. This matters because a unit we covered in class dealt with Food Security. The Unit was created by the Minnesota Council, and my teacher used the materials throughout the entire unit. Our school district had over 40% of the students on free or reduced lunch. In other words, many of our students suffered from food insecurity. The Minnesota Council's Food Security unit helped me better understand what food security is, why it is so important, and ways we can better ensure humans can avoid food insecurity and benefit from food security.

Finally, the Minnesota Council makes learning fun. Please take a few minutes and watch the video "Unemployment Funk" on YouTube. This video was created by two of my classmates and myself for the Minnesota Council's Rockonomix Video Competition. We placed 2nd!! To me, it's a perfect example of how great lessons can lead to learning and fun for everyone! Thank you, Minnesota Council on Economic Education!



Adam Rushmeyer

9-12 Social Studies

Melrose Area High School, Melrose

I have been teaching social studies for 21 years, and have focused on teaching economics and American government for about 15 years. When I graduated from college my intention was to be a history teacher; I had no interest or background in teaching economics. I had only taken one undergraduate survey course in economics. Then the teacher who was teaching economics in our high school left and it fell to me to teach those classes. I was not at all prepared for the task. Almost 15 years later, I have come to believe, with the sustained and generous help of MCEE, that exposing high school students to the economic way of thinking is perhaps the most important mission of a social studies teaching department.

Since I began teaching economics, I have taken 4 separate, intensive week long summer courses in economic education offered by MCEE. These experiences have allowed me to earn several graduate credits, but more importantly they've introduced me to a network of other experienced teachers of economics. I've compiled many inches of sequenced binders of materials that have evolved into my semester long economics course's curriculum. My economics classes are based almost exclusively on these MCEE materials and resources. I don't use, and never have used, a textbook or a traditional textbook based approach to meeting the state standards. MCEE has been instrumental in allowing me to escape the limitations of relying on a textbook as a cornerstone of classroom instruction.

I did not expect to learn as much about teaching pedagogy in general as I have through MCEE. I have learned more education pedagogy from the MCEE courses and workshops than I did in my teacher preparation coursework as an undergraduate. These highly effective teaching techniques have spilled over into the other classes I teach as well. Moreover, I would say that I've learned more pedagogy through MCEE than I have through my district's staff development programs over the past decade.

In addition to the courses and teaching materials provided by MCEE, my students have also participated in MCEE sponsored contests over the years. Through the Global Food Challenge, my students have completed a rigorous 30-40 page research project applying economic concepts to an agricultural commodity. I have had scores of students come back after their first year of college and thank me for making them do the dreaded "project" as they feel it gave them a taste of the kind of thinking and writing that would be expected of them in college. The annual Economics Challenge, a quiz bowl type competition, has been a fun way to motivate some students to further study economics at a college level.

In conclusion, MCEE has helped me introduce more than 1500 Melrose Area High School students to an economic way of thinking over the past 16 years. These students are better thinkers and decision makers because of it. It is clear to me that none of this would have happened but for the efforts of MCEE and I am thankful for the opportunity for this committee to hear my story.



Brandy Saddiqui

9-12 Social Studies

Thomas Edison High School, Minneapolis

As a high school Social Studies teacher, one of the least desired classes to teach is Economics. Economics is not a class such as US History, World History, Geography, or Government. It felt different, more technical, there was not a clear timeline, and concepts felt a bit void of human contact and interaction. No one wants to teach Economics, typically because no one feels comfortable teaching Economics, and that is not where their passion lies. Social Studies Departments struggle to find teachers who want to teach Economics, who are passionate about teaching Economics and can make Economics a true humanities course.

Students and teachers are both hesitant about this subject that often seems too unfamiliar to them, and feels boring and dry. After the week-long MCEE professional development in 2015, I learned how to “gamify” teaching Economics in a way that I could not have previously imagined. There is so much strength in giving students scenarios and gamifying a concept, and as a teacher, I knew that, but I had no idea how to make that happen in Economics. After attending the week-long professional development, I learned about the use of scenarios, games, and simulations to increase student comprehension. I learned how to become more comfortable with the content. Their training “How to Teach High School Economics” was the best training I have ever had given specifically to Economics.

Most districts do not really touch upon Economics, and while there are many sources for the other subjects, Economics simply does not have as much. The resources we do have are often convoluted with terminology and seem confusing and dry. The training I had with MCEE in 2015 changed my mind about teaching Economics because it was clear for the first time, and I felt that I had tangible games, simulations, and resources to use. These trainings are taught by Economics teachers, colleagues from other districts who had to figure out how to teach this course. It simply is not the same to compare Economics to US History or World History in terms of accessibility for content and understanding. Most secondary social studies teachers have only taken one or two college-level courses in Economics. As teachers, we need more support, and MCEE is unlike any other in the field in terms of support.



Joel Coleman

9-12 Social Studies

Ubah Medical Academy, Hopkins

I found my passion in the education field in college when I volunteered with an after school program where I saw firsthand the obstacles first-generation students had at gaining college admission. I continued my work with several other programs that aimed at helping students gain admission to college as well as a college degree. As I did more research, though, I found the best solution to help my students achieve a college degree, and that is offering them free college credits in high school in co-enrollment classes. This is a big deal for my students, since I teach at an East-African Charter School where 95% of students are first generation. Not only do the students not have to pay money for the college credit, they also get used to the college level content. Without the help of MCEE and the numerous trainings they offered, I would not have qualified or been prepared to teach CIS classes. My current and former students now have a much higher chance at gaining a college degree, and MCEE helped make this possible.

I never thought I would be an economics teacher; I had taken was one introductory course in college. In my time learning from MCEE, I have attended several 10 week summer courses, numerous annual conferences, presentations on special topics, and developed a economics-oriented teacher network for support, all to the benefit of my students, this year an in all the year's of my teaching to come. MCEE has given me the tools to have a oversized impact of my students, empowering them to chart a successful future.

MCEE has also helped me more fully engage my students in economics. My students participate in MCEE's Economics Challenge, which pits students in a quiz bowl challenge against students from other schools. This past year, our Ubah team won the state competition. I could not have made this happen for my students without the support of trainings provided by MCEE.

Typically the teams I bring for the economics challenge are not the top performing students of the school. Normally, they are seniors who underperformed their first few years of high school, but really engage with economics and start seeing themselves as a worthy student. The first year I participated in the economics challenge none of my four students had above a 2.0 GPA and were headed to two year colleges. After getting second at the Urban Regional Competition, they started realizing they had what it takes to be successful in academic. Three of them ended up attending a four year college, one of them in the field of business/economics.



Jesse (Xinyue) Zong

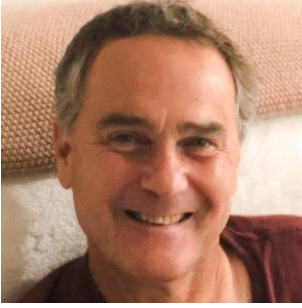
Master Teacher

Jie Ming Madarin Immersion Academy, St. Paul

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Xinyue Zong. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Master’s Degree in Public Affairs. I learned macro and microeconomics and quantitative analysis methods, but I wasn’t equipped to teach young students, at their level of understanding, to comprehend this complicated world. After I became an elementary classroom teacher at Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion School in SPPS, I was looking for effective ways to teach economics since it is also one of my subjects. Luckily I became acquainted with the Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE) when teaching summer schools in 2021 and 2022. I discovered how solid and well-structured MCEE’s curriculum was, and I implemented it in my classes immediately. Students loved it! It focused on a few essential but abstract concepts and provided vivid life scenarios to help students to think, to discuss, to weigh the options and to make decisions.

Also, the MCEE curriculum allows teachers to modify lessons to meet students’ needs. Teachers can easily build up layers of complexity through multiple grade levels, or dovetail it into other subjects due to time limits, or translate the materials into another language – just like I do. It’s difficult to find such flexibility in other curricula. All of these possibilities benefit from the accurate design of the curriculum. It scales up by grade level and scaffolds strategies to handle different scenarios with age-appropriate options. It makes abstract concepts such as opportunity cost or budget understandable, enjoyable, and practical. And they can easily apply their knowledge from class to real-life problems.

MCEE gives teachers opportunities to learn, discuss and to get inspired through various workshops. Teaching economics can be scary for some classroom teachers. The topics can be controversial and hard to manage, so MCEE provides training for teachers to get familiar with the curriculum and the scoring system. These are very powerful tools that MCEE provides to help teachers and their students to think rationally about the world and themselves.



Rayce Hardy

9-12 Social Studies

Austin High School, Austin

Riverland Community College, Albert Lea

The Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE) has been the primary resource in my economics courses since I began teaching 30 years ago. The expertise and approachability of the Master Teachers, Program Directors, and Staff are second to none. Our Social Sciences Department utilizes the teacher education programs, curricula, student competitions, and personal contacts offered by MCEE each year. Economic literacy for students and teachers has never been more important than it is today, and no organization is more dedicated than the MCEE to increasing economic literacy.

Many teachers in Minnesota are assigned the teaching of economics standards and/or the teaching of an economics course without what they feel is enough training or expertise in the discipline of economics. MCEE provides teachers with the needed content knowledge and the best practices in teaching that content.

Most important, however, is what the MCEE does for the students of Minnesota. Student learning is the ultimate goal of all MCEE programs, competitions, and curricula. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers can be assured that when they use MCEE materials and participate in MCEE programs that they will be perfectly aligned with Minnesota Standards and best practices in education. The result is the best possible learning opportunities for Minnesota's students. In addition, MCEE student competitions are designed to ensure that students are given opportunities that are engaging, relevant, and fun!



Emily Anderson

9-12 Social Studies

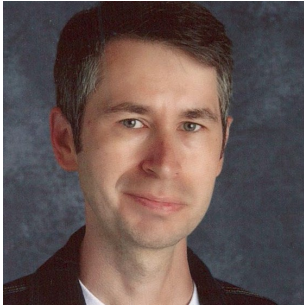
Blaine High School, Blaine

I stumbled across MCEE's programming the summer before my first year of teaching. I had just been hired to teach Economics at Blaine High School (including Advanced Placement Microeconomics) and I honestly had no idea where to start. I didn't even know what microeconomics meant. I took one economics class in college when earning my license, but I squeezed it into a summer term and took a macroeconomics course at the local community college just to "get it done". I was intimidated and nervous and really wanted to do a good job but lacked the tools and resources and knowledge to do so.

MCEE's one week "Teaching High School Economics" course that summer changed everything for me. While I started the week feeling like a little fish in a big sea, I ended the week feeling capable, qualified, and dare I say EXCITED to teach econ! MCEE taught me the relevant content by presenting engaging simulations, interactive activities, case studies, and other resources that I could take directly to my classroom and use with my students. I networked with experienced economics teachers and professors from the area that I knew I could contact with questions anytime, and it brought so much peace of mind knowing that MCEE was there to support me as well.

I went on to take every course and workshop that MCEE had to offer. MCEE helped me realize my passion for the subject matter. I am so lucky to have a job that I truly love, and I credit that to MCEE. While my friends in the business world dread Mondays, I wake up with a little extra pep in my step and song in my heart as I'm driving to work knowing that I will make a difference in the lives of students by helping them prepare for financial well being in the real world. I am proud to say I have been partnering with MCEE as a master teacher for the past decade, helping provide this valuable programming to other teachers who feel the way I once felt.

Thank you, MCEE, for revolutionizing economics education in Minnesota!



Steven Cullison

9-12 Social Studies

Edina High School, Edina

MCEE first came to my aid when I discovered their classroom activities. So many of the best and most interactive approaches I used in my first economics classes, such as the wheat market and a drama tying pollution to externalities, came from MCEE, and I still use the approaches today

My students have participated in the council's Economics Challenge for years. The challenge motivates my students, provides an opportunity for differentiation and enrichment for students seeking an additional challenge, and brings my students and our high school a sense of pride. It's one of my favorite parts of teaching economics each year. Attending MCEE professional development opportunities I learned about the council's commitment to equity, which was exciting! The training I received on activities and strategies help make my classes more energized and interactive.

I can no longer count the number of students who have come to me, during their first year of college, to tell me that my course inspired them to major in economics or business. Invariably, they cite the occasions on which we do economics, frequently using activities I've learned from MCEE resources and professional development, instead of just talking about economics. The students who've participated in the Economics Challenge go on to study economics or business at an especially high rate, with their efforts in the competition figuring prominently in their college applications.

Finally, coaching my students through the MCEE economics contests, and having been selected an MCEE educator of the year in 2019, have motivated me to stick to teaching economics. My initial degree was in psychology, and I enjoy teaching that subject a great deal. There is a shortage of economics teachers, locally and nationally. It intimidates people. Besides its work to prepare instructors, and make teaching econ less scary, MCEE helps to keep people in the field. MCEE has ensured that I am an econ lifer.



Philip Trowbridge

9-12 Social Studies

Barnesville High School, Barnesville

When I started teaching Economics in 1998 I was woefully unprepared. I had Micro and Macro Economics in college and had some base knowledge of the subject, but not enough to really teach it to others. I remember a student asking me to explain a concept the first year I was teaching and having to tell him I couldn't because I didn't understand it either.

Then I attended a four-day workshop for new Economics teachers sponsored by MCEE. I was able to gain knowledge of Economics, but more importantly, I was able to learn how to teach the concepts to others. Twenty years later I still use many of the lessons I learned in those four days. I have worked with approximately a dozen student teachers in my twenty-eight years and I always tell them that if they end up teaching Economics, they must attend the MCEE workshop for high school teachers. That workshop alone is so important it is worth funding MCEE's work.

They have been helpful to my teaching in many other ways as well. The curriculum materials I have gotten over the years, the knowledge gained from the summer conference or the Economics Challenge that my students look forward to each year, have all been valuable resources to me.

The Economics Challenge is the highlight of every year for me. My students work hard all year to make sure they get picked for our team. They gladly spend time after school studying for the competition. It has really increased the interest they have for the class.

I hope you will be able to help fund their programs so they can continue to help teachers all over our state.



Kellie Friend

2nd Grade

Turtle Lake Elementary School, Shoreview

As an elementary educator, I am responsible for teaching all subject areas. With much of our day dedicated to reading, writing, phonics, and math, there is little room for other content areas such as economics. How do you find the time, and more importantly, how do you find the content knowledge and resources to teach economics to young learners? Fortunately, for me, I found MCEE. In 2009, I took my first economics class, and that class changed me as an educator.

Since that time, I have grown and developed in my knowledge of economics and acquired a confidence and passion for teaching it. I am no longer intimidated by the economic terms and the knowledge I need to teach my students. I discovered the power of teaching economics, and I immersed my students in it. My passion for economics took on a life of its own. I now see economics in everything and find it impossible not to incorporate it into every aspect of my classroom teaching. I personally have seen my students thrive and grow and become connected to their world in authentic ways.

MCEE provides vetted resources for elementary educators. They provide teachers with all the information needed to engage young learners. They are integral in supporting teachers through their outreach, training, and resources. I have come to fully recognize the absolute importance in economic education, and its impact on students. Developing academic programs that will support economics education in the elementary setting is essential. I am ever so grateful for that first course, the instructors, and the council for helping me become a better teacher, allowing me to reach my students in a meaningful way, and connect them to their world.



Kristine West

*Director of the Minnesota Center for
Diversity in Economics; Associate
Professor, Economics
St. Catherine University, St. Paul*

My name is Kristine West and I am a faculty member at St. Catherine University and director of the Minnesota Center for Diversity in Economics – a center affiliated with the Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE). I know from first hand experience that the council does important and impactful work in our state. I particularly want to highlight the Council's targeted outreach to groups traditionally underrepresented in economics.

Economics suffers from gender and racial underrepresentation that actually exceeds the more widely publicized underrepresentation in STEM fields. In Minnesota, less than one third of college economics students are women and only 12% are students of color – a paltry 4% women of color. The MCEE is doing important work to remedy this problem and ensure that people from all backgrounds can harness the power of economics education in their personal and professional lives. Two examples of direct student programming -- every spring the council hosts the Urban Economics Challenge to encourage students from underrepresented backgrounds to compete in the state competition and each summer they host the College Dollars and Sense program to help underrepresented students plan for college.

In addition to its outstanding student programming, the Council creates engaging curricula that showcases the breadth and depth of what economics offers – exactly the sort of curricula that has been shown to increase the number of underrepresented students in economics. Two examples come to mind – in 2017 I worked with a team of Minnesota teachers to create and share lessons that teach economics through a lens of environmental sustainability and since 2019 the council has been a national leader in culturally responsive personal finance. These curricula put the tools into teachers' hands that they need to teach economics in a way that gets students excited.

At St. Kate's I have seen the impact of the excellent MCEE K-12 programming, curricula and teacher professional development first hand and my Center, the Minnesota Center for Diversity in Economics, works to keep this momentum going as students advance through college and into their careers. We have a mentorship program that connects high school and college students with young professionals and we feature a diverse line up of national and local speakers. These students are the future leaders of our great state and equipped with the knowledge and skills that economics education provides; I am confident that they will do great things.



Karrionna Drain

Student

St. Catherine University, St. Paul

My name is Karrionna Drain and I am a student at St. Catherine University studying economics. The Minnesota Council on Economic Education's (MCEE) programming has helped to put me on a path that I am passionate about. Back in high school I didn't even know what econ was and the MCEE Economics Challenge was like a new world for me. My high school economics teacher – Mr. Schmidt – benefited from the MCEE's professional development and he introduced us to the Council's Economics Challenge. I remember competing and it was a highlight of my high school experience. I didn't know it then but participating in the Economics Challenge would be the seed that has now blossomed into my learning and working in a field that I love.

The council has continued to shape my experience in college. There are many examples I would love to tell you about but I think I will share three stories that made a lasting impression: The first is when I was doing work for the MCEE, a project where I was examining representation in economics materials and I discovered Dr. Lisa Cook – it blew my mind to learn about other black women in econ studying topics like economic growth & development, innovation and financial markets. I then continued on and I joined the CFEM mentorship program working with an amazing mentor – Addison Cross – who uplifted me, helped me organize the challenges of being a college student, and exposed me to different opportunities around the world to continue growing my knowledge after college. And to bring it full circle, my final story is about the time I taught an economics lesson to students at Edina High School – it was a touching and also chaotic time of interacting with high school students who like me may not yet know how life changing the lessons of economics can be.

I urge you to support the important work of the Minnesota Council on Economic Education as it has made an impact on my life and I know it will make an impact on others in years to come.

Executive Summary

The Minnesota Council on Economic Education provides high-impact professional development programs for educators and engaging programs for students in economics and personal finance at locations across the state to reach a broad cross-section of Minnesotans. Participants reached by the programs in the past two years are similar in their ethnic and gender make-up to the overall state population of students and teachers.

Since 2014, MCEE has intentionally worked to increase the diversity of its program participants to empower marginalized communities around the state with financial and economic knowledge and support to overcome systemic barriers to accessing financial tools, resources, and careers. Through the use of targeted programs and marketing, MCEE has facilitated opportunities for students of color, students from out-state Minnesota, and those who would be the first in their families to attend college. These programs reach a population significantly more diverse than the statewide population of students, as shown in the data below.

MCEE Target Population

MCEE makes its core programs available to all public and private school educators and students statewide. Below are statistics representing our approximate reach in 2022.

<u>Students</u>		<u>Teachers in Relevant Licensure Areas</u>	
Statewide:	870,506	Statewide:	25,000
Reached by MCEE:	61,000	Reached by MCEE:	1,273
Percentage Reached:	7.01%	Percentage Reached:	5.1%

Background: Ethnic & Gender Profile of All Minnesota Students

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	1.71%	Male:	51.43%
Asian:	6.95%	Female:	48.57%
Black/African American:	11.65%		
Hispanic/Latino:	10.52%		
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0.10%		
Two or more races:	5.98%		
White:	63.09%		

MCEE Testimony Packet
Student & Teacher Demographic Data

Background: Ethnic & Gender Profile of All Minnesota Educators*

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0.75%	Male:	25.45%
Asian:	1.76%	Female:	74.46%
Black/African American:	1.32%		
Hispanic/Latino:	1.70%		
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0.08%		
Two or more races:	0.78%		
White:	93.45%		

**Due to errors with the PELSB teacher tracking software the percentages for ethnic reporting data do not equal 100%, this is due to double counting within PELSB.*

MCEE Population Served in FY2022

In the 2022 fiscal year, MCEE expanded its suite of programs to reach more teachers from diverse backgrounds, and those serving communities around the state. In all, MCEE offered 97 workshops for educators and served 1,704 teachers (1,273 from Minnesota) by providing over 157 hours of professional development opportunities.

Ethnic & Gender Profile of Participating Educators*

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0.1%	Agender:	0%
Asian:	2.7%	Gender Non-conforming:	0.1%
Black/African American:	1.2%	Genderqueer:	0.1%
Hispanic/Latino:	0.3%	Man:	12.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0%	Non-Binary:	0.1%
Two or more races:	0.6%	Prefer not to say:	1.9%
White:	38.6%	Two-spirit:	0%
Prefer Not to Answer:	2.9%	Woman:	31.5%
No data:	53.6%	No data:	53.6%

In the 2020 fiscal year, MCEE programs succeeded at reaching a more diverse student population, engaging students from out-state Minnesota and from communities of color across the state with targeted programs that provided relevant and meaningful lessons in economics and personal finance.

Ethnic & Gender Profile of Participating Students*

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0.34%	Agender:	0.9%
Asian:	7.14%	Gender Non-conforming:	0%
Black/African American:	3.87%	Genderqueer:	0.34%
Hispanic/Latino:	3.01%	Man:	41.65%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0%	Non-Binary:	0.43%
Two or more races:	0.86%	Prefer not to say:	31.24%
White:	53.01%	Two-spirit:	0.26%
Prefer Not to Answer:	31.76%	Woman:	31.5%

Targeted Programs: 2022 Urban Economics Challenge

Ethnic & Gender Profile of Participating Students*

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	0%	Man:	0%
Asian:	0%	Woman:	100%
Black/African American:	100%		
Hispanic/Latino:	0%		
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0%		
Two or more races:	0%		
White:	0%		

Targeted Programs: 2022 College Dollars & Sense Summer Youth Personal Finance Institute

Ethnic & Gender Profile of Participating Students*

American Indian/Alaskan Native:	4%	Agender:	0%
Asian:	28%	Gender Non-conforming:	0%
Black/African American:	26.67%	Genderqueer:	1.33%
Hispanic/Latino:	9.33%	Man:	32%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:	0%	Non-Binary:	0%
White:	26.67%	Prefer not to say:	5.33%
No data:	5.33%	Two-spirit:	0%
		Woman:	61.33%